

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A spindle motor comprising:

a chassis;

a rotor magnet;

a rotor-side bearing member;

a stator-side bearing member;

a rotor hub having a hollow circular hole and disposed to the center of rotation;

a support column secured to the chassis; and

a stator armature having a wound coil and disposed to the chassis in a position confronting the rotor magnet;

wherein the support column is disposed to the chassis in a manner to pass through the hollow circular opening in the rotor hub;

wherein the chassis has a protruding portion in an area around ~~the cylindrical portion~~ of the support column, and a height of the protruding portion is greater than a height of the stator-side bearing member; and

wherein the rotor-side bearing member, in combination with the stator-side bearing member disposed to the chassis, forms a fluid bearing for supporting the rotor hub.

2. (Previously presented) The spindle motor according to claim 1, wherein the fluid bearing comprises:

a thrust bearing having a dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two axially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side

bearing member, and

a radial bearing having another dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two radially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side bearing member.

3. (Currently Amended) The spindle motor according to ~~any of claim 1 and claim 19~~, wherein the rotor hub and the rotor-side bearing member are made of a same material and formed integrally.

4. (Currently Amended) The spindle motor according to ~~any of claim 1 and claim 19~~, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises a flat portion and a cylindrical portion, and the flat portion and the cylindrical portion are made of separate pieces and assembled into a unit.

5. (Currently Amended and Withdrawn) The spindle motor according to ~~any of claim 1 and claim 19~~, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises only a cylindrical portion.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously presented) The spindle motor according to claim 1, wherein the protruding portion of the chassis is formed into a shape that a part of the protruding portion extending beyond an upper end of the stator-side bearing member is tapered so that a diameter of the part becomes smaller the more the protruding portion extends above the upper end of the bearing member.

9. (Currently Amended and Withdrawn) The spindle motor according to ~~any of~~

claim ~~[[1]] 4 and 19~~, wherein the support column has a threaded portion in a tip end of the cylindrical portion.

10. (Currently Amended) A disk drive unit provided with a spindle motor, the spindle motor comprising:

- a chassis;
- a rotor magnet;
- a rotor-side bearing member;
- a stator-side bearing member;
- a rotor hub having a hollow circular hole and disposed to the center of rotation;
- a support column secured to the chassis; and
- a stator having a wound coil and disposed to the chassis in a position confronting the rotor magnet;

wherein the support column is disposed to the chassis in a manner to pass through the hollow circular opening in the rotor hub;

the disk drive unit further comprising:

- a disk having a recording layer formed on a surface thereof, and disposed to an upper surface of a flange portion of the rotor hub in the spindle motor;
- a cover having an abutment portion in abutment on one of tip ends of the cylindrical portion constituting the support column in the spindle motor;
- a signal conversion element for recording and reproducing data in the recording layer formed on the disk; and
- a swing member for positioning the signal conversion element to a predetermined

tracking position;

wherein the chassis has a protruding portion in an area around ~~the cylindrical portion of~~ the support column, and a height of the protruding portion is greater than a height of the stator-side bearing member; and

wherein the rotor-side bearing member, in combination with the stator-side bearing member disposed to the chassis, forms a fluid bearing for supporting the rotor hub.

11. (Currently Amended and Withdrawn) The disk drive unit according to ~~any~~ of claim 10 ~~and claim 21~~, wherein:

the support column of the spindle motor has a threaded portion in a tip end of the cylindrical portion;

the cover is provided with a through hole in a position of the abutment portion corresponding to the threaded portion of the support column; and

the cover is held in abutment on and secured to the tip end of the cylindrical portion of the support column with a screw in the through hole of the cover.

12. (Previously presented) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein the fluid bearing comprises:

a thrust bearing having a dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two axially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side bearing member; and

a radial bearing having another dynamic pressure generating groove formed in any of two radially confronting surfaces of the rotor-side bearing member and the stator-side bearing member.

13. (Currently amended) The disk drive unit according to ~~any of claim 10 and claim 21~~, wherein the rotor hub and the rotor-side bearing member are made of a same material and formed integrally.

14. (Currently Amended) The disk drive unit according to ~~any of claim 10 and claim 21~~, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises a flat portion and a cylindrical portion, and the flat portion and the cylindrical portion are made of separate pieces and assembled into a unit.

15. (Currently Amended and Withdrawn) The disk drive unit according to ~~any of claim 10 and 21~~, wherein the support column retaining the stator-side bearing member comprises only a cylindrical portion.

16. (Canceled )

17. (Canceled )

18. ( Previously presented) The disk drive unit according to claim 10, wherein the protruding portion of the chassis is formed into a shape that a part of the protruding portion extending beyond an upper end of the stator-side bearing member is tapered so that a diameter of the part becomes smaller the more the protruding portion extends above the upper end of the bearing member.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Canceled)

21. ( Canceled)

22. ( Canceled)